

In these days of the SST and the family car, it is difficult to imagine the excitement caused by the arrival of the first train in Raleigh. All that we can see of the former glory of the rail system is the rapidly decaying Amtrac station and the Seaboard Coastline Office Building, moved from its original location and preserved only after a long campaign. However, in 1840 things were different.

HUZZA! HUZZA! HUZZA! The Raleigh and Gaston Rail Road is coming and make no mistake. The passenger cars are expected here tonight, and we jolly Cits can now amuse ourselves with Rail Road incidents, until the Assembly meets.
(Raleigh Register, March 24, 1840.)

The era of rapid transportation had been introduced to North Carolina. There were those visionaries who could see beyond the line from Raleigh to Gaston.

New York shall be only six or eight days journey from New Orleans, not only for a rich class travelling in a privileged manner, but for every shopkeeper and every workman, separation will be no longer possible. Great distances will have disappeared, and this colossus, ten times larger than France, will maintain its unity without effort.
(Chief Engineer's Report, Raleigh and Gaston Railroad Company, May 30, 1840.)

The railroad had made its impression on Raleigh, but the young industry was not without its growing pains. Although construction of the warehouse had advanced to the point that the March, 1840, banquet was held in the structure, it was not completed by the following year. "Smith shop, warehouse, offices, etc., at Raleigh are yet partially completed....Several hands are now employed in erecting a suitable Carpenters Shop, with a view to the manufacture of our own freight cars" (Fifth Annual Report of the Raleigh Gaston Railroad Company, June 7, 1841, pages 5-6 in W. C. Tucker Collection). It must be assumed that work proceeded apace after this time. In 1847 the Raleigh-Gaston Company owned a rather impressive array of structures located on three acres in Raleigh. These structures included: a wooden depot 30 x 70 feet; a brick warehouse 100 x 100 feet; a machine and smith shop 90 x 90 feet, also brick; and a wooden carpenter shop 24 x 60 feet (from Comptroller's and Treasurer's Papers - Internal Improvements, Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, Box 37).

The 1847 J. W. Johnson map of Raleigh shows two structures on the lot in question. (See Figure II.) Although the scale of this map is somewhat suspect, it is possible to identify these structures.